

Courts

Mission

The mission of the Courts is to decide cases, manage the operation of the State's justice system, and regulate the practice of law.

Summary of Activities

Three separate courts – the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals, and the Tax Court – are part of the Courts system. The system also includes the Clerk of Courts.

The Supreme Court is the court of last resort in Indiana. As such, it is the final voice on the interpretation of the laws of this State. Cases coming before the Indiana Supreme Court are decided by a panel of five Justices. In addition to having jurisdiction over all capital cases, the Supreme Court has exclusive jurisdiction over the admission and discipline of attorneys and the supervision and discipline of judges. The Court also manages the operation of the State's trial court systems. The Legislature and the Court have established various divisions, agencies, boards, commissions, and committees to assist the Court with its broad responsibilities, including: the Divisions of State Court and Supreme Court Administration, the Disciplinary Commission, the Judicial Center, the Board of Law Examiners, the Continuing Legal Education Commission, the Judicial Qualifications Commission, the Judges and Lawyers Assistance Committee, and the Race and Gender Fairness Commission.



The Indiana Supreme Court

Back Row: Justice Frank Sullivan, Jr., Chief Justice of Indiana Randall T. Shepard, Justice Brent E. Dickson

Front Row: Justice Robert D. Rucker, Justice Theodore R. Boehm

The Court of Appeals is an intermediate appellate court with initial general jurisdiction over almost all appeals arising in the trial courts of Indiana, as well as appeals from the Worker's Compensation Board, the Department of Workforce Development, the Utility Regulatory Commission, and the Civil Rights Commission. The Court of Appeals is composed of fifteen Judges with cases decided by rotating panels of three Judges.

The Tax Court has jurisdiction over appeals from final determinations of the State Department of Revenue and the State Board of Tax Commissioners.

The Clerk of the Court is responsible for receiving all filings for the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, and Tax Court, and transmitting those filings to the appropriate court administration. The Clerk maintains the dockets for all filed cases, transmits all orders and opinions handed down by the three courts, and is responsible for maintaining, safekeeping, and archiving closed case files. The Clerk of the Court also maintains the roll of attorneys in Indiana, collects attorney registration fees, and swears-in new attorneys. The Clerk's office is a primary point of contact between the bar and the appellate courts.

External Factors

The Court system is externally affected by the number of civil law suits filed, the number of criminal prosecutions commenced in Indiana, and the number of appeals taken by litigants in Indiana. All these activities have steadily increased over time.

Evaluation and Accomplishments

The Indiana Court of Appeals disposes of roughly 2,100 appeals per year. The Supreme Court disposes of around 1,000 cases per year. The Tax Court handles about 130 cases each year. The cases are generally decided promptly. For example, the average age of cases pending before the Court of Appeals is only about one and a half months.



**The Indiana
Court of Appeals**

Plans for the Biennium

The Court of Appeals plans to keep the time it takes to decide appeals at its current low level, despite increasing caseloads. One of the most important ongoing initiatives of the Court system to keep pace with the expanding demand for court services is the integration of the use of technology in the trial courts throughout the State. The Judicial Technology and Automation Committee has been formed to address that issue. Implementation of a comprehensive plan is underway to improve trial court computerized case management systems and the sharing of electronic data with and among (1) trial and appellate courts and courts' clerks, (2) county-base and statewide agencies and organizations that provide information to and receive information from courts and court clerks, (3) the general public, and (4) the General Assembly and other state policymakers. The Supreme Court is also very concerned with ensuring gender and racial equity, and the Race and Gender Fairness Commission will be assisting the Court system in that regard.

